

The House Committee on Judiciary offers the following substitute to HB 1071:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

To amend Article 4 of Chapter 18 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to inspection of public records, so as to provide that certain requests may be required to be in writing; to provide for the award of attorney's fees to a person or entity bringing a successful action to enforce compliance with the requirements relating to the inspection of public records; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

Article 4 of Chapter 18 of Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to inspection of public records, is amended by striking subsection (f) of Code Section 50-18-70, relating to inspection of public records, and inserting in its place the following:

"(f)(1) The individual in control of such public record or records shall have a reasonable amount of time to determine whether or not the record or records requested are subject to access under this article and to permit inspection and copying. In no event shall this time exceed three business days. Where responsive records exist but are not available within three business days of the request, a written description of such records, together with a timetable for their inspection and copying, shall be provided within that period; provided, however, that records not subject to inspection under this article need not be made available for inspection and copying or described other than as required by subsection (h) of Code Section 50-18-72, and no records need be made available for inspection or copying if the public officer or agency in control of such records shall have obtained, within that period of three business days, an order based on an exception in this article of a superior court of this state staying or refusing the requested access to such records.

(2) An agency or public officer may pursuant to a written policy require that requests for records made pursuant to this article be submitted in writing, except that written requests shall not be required when a requesting party requests:

(A) An agenda, summary of matters acted upon, or minutes of an agency's or public officer's most recent meeting; or

(B) Any other records an agency or public officer determines, by ordinance, resolution, or other official act of the agency, to be available without a written request.

Where requests are required to be in writing, the party requesting the records shall be informed that the request must be made in writing. The written request may be delivered to an agency by mail, facsimile, courier, e-mail, or other delivery in person. The agency or public officer shall prepare, and make available to persons requesting records, forms upon which a person may make his or her written request, but the person shall not be required to use an agency's or public officer's form. The agency or public officer shall make a reasonable effort to assist a person making a request for records, as needed."

SECTION 2.

Said article is further amended by striking subsection (b) of Code Section 50-18-73, relating to jurisdiction to enforce the inspection of public records, attorney's fees and litigation expenses, and good faith reliance as defense to action, and inserting in its place the following:

"(b)(1) For purposes of this subsection, the term:

(A) 'Custodial party' means the person, agency, or other entity having custody of records open to the public under this article.

(B) 'Requesting party' means the person, firm, corporation, or other entity bringing an action against a custodial party to enforce compliance with the provisions of this article.

(2) In any action brought to enforce the provisions of this chapter in which the court finds in favor of the requesting party, the court shall assess in favor of the requesting party reasonable attorney's fees and other litigation costs reasonably incurred.

(3) In any action brought to enforce the provisions of this chapter in which the court determines that ~~either~~ the requesting party acted without substantial justification ~~either~~ in not complying with this chapter or in instituting the litigation, the court shall, unless it finds that special circumstances exist, assess in favor of the ~~complaining~~ custodial party reasonable attorney's fees and other litigation costs reasonably incurred. Whether the position of the ~~complaining~~ requesting party was substantially justified shall be

3 **SECTION 3.**
4 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.

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